

A STUDY OF THE SOVIET GROUND FORCES

CIA/RR EP 63-74

October 1963

**AN INTERIM REPORT
OF THE
CIA/DIA PANEL FOR A SPECIAL STUDY
OF THE SOVIET GROUND FORCES
FOR
SECRETARY McNAMARA**

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FOREWORD

In response to a request from the Secretary of Defense, a CIA/DIA Panel was set up to make a thorough re-examination of the evidence and an assessment of the levels of confidence or ranges of uncertainty which apply to major quantitative and qualitative aspects of the Soviet ground force. A partial and interim report was prepared which presented the tentative findings of the Panel on two aspects of the problem, the present number of major line elements in the Soviet ground force and the gross capabilities and mobilization potential of this force in terms of military manpower. Because the basic report discussed some highly sensitive intelligence sources, its distribution was severely limited.

It has become apparent that a wider distribution of the principal findings is required for planning and policy purposes. In order to satisfy this requirement, the Deputy Director (Intelligence), Central Intelligence Agency and the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency have authorized the dissemination of the summary and conclusions of the report at the SECRET/BACKGROUND USE ONLY level.

Because the Panel's study of the Soviet ground force is continuing and may result in some changes, it must be emphasized that the findings presented here are tentative. Further, because the United States Intelligence Board has not approved the report, the findings are those of the Panel alone and do not represent a change in National Intelligence Estimates.

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Current Soviet military literature indicates that these D/CDs are of three types which the Panel has designated as at combat, reduced and cadre personnel strengths. The Panel considers the "combat" to be manned at or near authorized wartime personnel strength and designed to participate in the very earliest stage of a war; and the "reduced" to be manned at about 70 percent of the "combat" and supposed to be brought up to authorized wartime strength very quickly after hostilities begin. Because of the Soviet mobilization system, the distinction between the personnel strengths of "combat" and "reduced" D/CDs might be eliminated quickly in an emergency. Finally, the "cadre" have most of their officer and NCO complement but only a few other troops; they are scheduled to be fleshed out with reservists in order to participate in a subsequent stage of the war.

On the basis of its detailed re-examination of the evidence, the Panel concludes with a high degree of confidence that between 115 and 135 D/CDs existed in the Soviet ground force in the first half of 1963. However, the Panel cannot rule out the possibility that the number may have been as low as 100 or as high as 150.

The examination of the evidence on total military manpower implied by the Soviet system for military conscription and the requirements for the remainder of the armed forces leads to the tentative conclusion that there were between 1.8 and 2.1 million men in the Soviet ground force in early 1963. Most of these, about three-quarters, were conscripts with an average of a year and a half of service; the remainder are professional NCOs and officers. However, the conscript system provides the USSR with a very large body of reservists with about three years of military experience for fleshing out the reduced strength and cadre D/CDs.

Because the evidence the Panel has reviewed is insufficient to determine the number of D/CDs in each of the three categories of personnel strength, the Panel examined several possible alternatives and evaluated their consistency with what is known about Soviet doctrine and the over-all personnel strength of the ground force. On this basis, the Panel tentatively believes that the following alternative allocations of the 115-135 D/CDs together with their implied total manpower levels for the Soviet ground

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Summary and Conclusions

The Panel has examined the evidence from all sources on the Soviet ground force* in terms of its organization, number of major line elements and manpower. We find that the quality of the evidence varies widely and does not permit high-confidence, single-valued assessments of most of the quantitative aspects of the force which have been examined. However, there is abundant evidence on the general nature of the force as to its organization, mission, magnitude, and system for acquiring manpower.

As to organization, it is clear that the Soviet ground force is administered from headquarters in Moscow through fifteen military districts in the USSR and three groups of forces stationed in the European Satellites. At the next level there probably are 22 or 23 field armies and five to seven corps, each of which has a number of "line divisions" and various combat and service support units; in addition there are some "line divisions" which do not appear to be subordinated to field armies or corps.

The Panel has exhausted the evidence on the number of "line divisions" in the Soviet ground force. The direct evidence is not adequate for determining the actual manning level of any of the Soviet "line divisions" with the possible exception of those in the groups of forces. For this reason we have been forced to assess the number of "line divisions" in the Soviet ground force without regard to manning levels. In order to emphasize this fact and to highlight the basic differences between US and Soviet "line divisions" even at TOE strength the Panel created the term D/CD (division/cadre division).

* Very generally, the Soviet ground force is defined to include those Soviet military personnel performing functions similar to most of those performed by the US Army with the principal exception of continental air defense.

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force are consistent with all available evidence:

<u>Alternative</u>	<u>Number of D/CDs</u>			<u>Total Ground Force Manpower (Million)</u>
	<u>Combat</u>	<u>Reduced</u>	<u>Cadre</u>	
A	58	35	22-42	1.5-2.1
B	65	25	25-45	1.6-2.1
C	75	25	15-35	1.7-2.3

The Panel believes that alternatives A and C bound the region of other reasonable alternatives which can be postulated. Soviet writings indicate that the major portion of the "ready" force is in Eastern Europe and Western USSR; the alternatives presented above assume a range of about 45 to 55 D/CDs at combat personnel strength in these areas.

It must be emphasized that the assessments presented above are tentative and are not meant to imply anything about the actual state of readiness of these units nor their equipment because the Panel has not yet completed its examination of these factors.

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